

Oviatt Library Service Assessment, Spring 2007

Executive Summary

May 12, 2008

Introduction

Overarching its instructional mission and collection development program is the Library's strong service commitment, which connects CSUN faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the greater community to information resources. Furthermore, the Library is committed to the continuous improvement of its services. Therefore, core to its planning process are regular surveys of its outcomes for services, particularly as to how they relate to student learning, as well as to overall patron satisfaction. See <http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/assessment.html#services> for the list of Library service outcomes.

Methodology

The Oviatt Library Service Assessment Survey (see [Appendix 1](#)) was distributed via an online form as a prominent link on the Library's home page, in hardcopy at service points in the Oviatt Library, and as hardcopy in classes from April to the end of spring semester 2007. It was publicized via email to various campus listservs, including those subscribed to by deans, associate deans, chairs, and their secretaries; librarians, members of the Faculty Senate Library Committee, and the campus assessment liaisons. Recipients of the email were asked to forward the survey URL to their faculty and students. Signs advertising the survey were also posted at Library service points. The survey was a close-end multiple-choice format with room for open-ended comments. In addition to basic demographic information and frequency of library use, respondents were asked about the courteousness and helpfulness of library staff, whether interactions with library staff increased their knowledge of how to use the library, as well as their perceptions about specific library services, facilities, and overall satisfaction with the Oviatt Library. For the summary of responses to each question on the survey, see <http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/wordocs/service%20survey%20summary%20data.doc>.

Demographics and Library Use

A total of 468 surveys were returned out of which 343 (73.6%) respondents indicated that they were undergraduates, 65 (13.9%) were graduates, 38 (8.2%) were faculty, 12 (2.6%) were staff, and eight (1.7%) were “other.” The departments/majors most frequently represented were Political Science (19%), Psychology (18%), Health Sciences (6.8%), and Theatre (4.7%). The other 50 CSUN departments had less than 3% each of the total. The majority of the respondents (77.6%) indicated that they had formal library instruction from a CSUN librarian. In terms of library use, 38% indicated that they visited the Oviatt Library between one to four times per month, and 30.8% said that they visited the Library two to three times per week. Similar numbers indicated that they accessed the Library’s electronic resources at the same level of frequency.

Service Desk Staff are Courteous and Helpful

The first part of the service assessment survey asked respondents to agree, disagree, remain neutral, or indicate no experience regarding their perceptions of the courteousness and helpfulness of Library staff at all service points, including virtual services. An average of 72.7% agreed that staff at all service points were courteous and helpful. The lowest level of agreement was in regards to the Exit booth workers (59.7%) and the highest levels were with the staffs at the Reference Desk (80.7%) and Information Desk (80.5%). Also interesting were the number of respondents who left the answer blank or filled in unknown/not used for many of the service desks. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Summary: Courteousness and Helpfulness of Library Staff by Service Point

Service Point	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total		Unknown/Missing	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent of Total
Circulation Desk	295	76.8	84	21.9	5	1.3	384	100	84	17.9
Exit	225	59.7	137	36.3	15	4	377	100	91	19.4
Information Desk	301	80.5	65	17.4	8	2.1	374	100	94	20.1
Reference Desk	297	80.7	66	17.9	5	1.4	368	100	100	21.4
RIS Office	198	73.6	63	23.4	8	3	269	100	199	42.5
Interlibrary Loan Office	150	69.8	51	23.7	14	6.5	215	100	253	54.1
Friends of the Library Bookstore	124	70.9	46	26.3	5	2.9	175	100	293	62.6

Summary: Courteousness and Helpfulness of Library Staff by Service Point										
Service Point	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total		Unknown/Missing	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent of Total
Special Collections & Archives	135	69.6	54	27.8	5	2.6	194	100	274	58.5
Music and Media Service Desk	191	76.1	51	20.3	9	3.6	251	100	217	46.4
Administrative Offices	126	71.2	48	27.1	3	1.7	177	100	291	62.2
Collaboratory	83	75.5	20	18.2	7	6.4	110	100	358	76.5
Reserves, Periodicals & Microform	130	72.2	48	26.7	2	1.1	180	100	288	61.5
Teacher Curriculum Center	108	70.6	41	26.8	4	2.6	153	100	315	67.3
Ask a Librarian Email Reference Service	97	71.3	36	26.5	3	2.2	136	100	332	70.9
Ask a Librarian Chat Reference Service	98	72.1	36	26.5	2	1.5	136	100	332	70.9
AVERAGES	170.5	72.7	56.4	24.5	6.3	2.9	233.3	100	234.7	50.2

Service Desk Staff Contributed to Understanding of the Library

The next part of the service assessment survey asked respondents to agree, disagree, remain neutral, or indicate no experience regarding their perceptions of Library staffs' contributions to their knowledge of how to use the Library. An average of 65.9% agreed that staff at all service points contributed to their understanding. The lowest level of agreement was again in regards to the Exit booth (49.3%) and the highest levels were with the Reference and Information Desk staffs (76.7%). Also interesting were the number of respondents who left the answer blank or filled in unknown/not used for many of the service desks. (See Table 2)

Table 2**Summary: Staff Contribution to Library Knowledge by Service Point**

Service Point	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total		Unknown/Missing	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent of Total
Circulation Desk	222	70	80	25.2	15	4.7	317	100	151	32.3
Exit	144	49.3	106	36.3	42	14.4	292	100	176	37.6
Information Desk	249	74.1	77	22.9	10	3	336	100	132	28.2
Reference Desk	243	76.7	66	20.8	8	2.5	317	100	151	32.3
RIS Office	163	70.9	61	26.5	6	2.6	230	100	238	50.9
Interlibrary Loan Office	114	63.3	57	31.7	9	5	180	100	288	61.5
Friends of the Library Bookstore	91	60.7	50	33.3	9	6	150	100	318	67.9
Special Collections & Archives	103	62.4	56	33.9	6	3.6	165	100	303	64.7
Music and Media Service Desk	158	69.9	57	25.2	11	4.9	226	100	242	51.7
Administrative Offices	97	63.4	50	32.7	6	3.9	153	100	315	67.3
Collaboratory	103	64.4	53	33.1	4	2.5	160	100	308	65.8
Reserves, Periodicals & Microform	125	66.5	58	30.9	5	2.7	188	100	280	59.8
Teacher Curriculum Center	100	64.5	52	33.5	3	1.9	155	100	313	66.9
Ask a Librarian Email Reference Service	94	65.3	47	32.6	3	2.1	144	100	324	69.2
Ask a Librarian Chat Reference Service	94	66.7	43	30.5	4	2.8	141	100	327	69.9
AVERAGES	140	65.9	60.9	29.9	9.4	4.2	210.3	100.0	257.7	55.1

Perceptions of Specific Types of Library Employees

76.4% of respondents agreed that reference librarians effectively teach students how to do library research. Librarians were also seen as actively engaged in outreach to faculty by 66.9% of respondents. The majority (72.8%) of respondents agreed that Library employees are courteous and helpful by telephone. Many of the open-ended comments praised the skill and helpfulness of library employees, some going out of their way to name names or at least mention specific service points.

Perceptions about the Library Facility and Equipment

Of the respondents who answered the question, 62.4% considered the Oviatt Library pleasant and inviting, and 7.3% left the answer blank or indicated “unknown.” The majority (67.3%) agreed that there was enough study space and it was quiet enough (65.9%), but an average of 22.8% did not answer these questions or indicated “unknown.” However, for those who provided comments, common negative themes related to noise, cleanliness, lighting, uncomfortable chairs, the temperature in the computer lab, and the lack of group study rooms. While 9.4% did not respond to the question about the convenience of the Library’s hours, the large majority (73.3%) found them convenient. However, some of the comments suggested extending hours on the weekends. Furthermore, 71.7% agreed that the Library’s computers and software supported course assignments and research, and 22.2% had no response or checked “unknown.” While 62.6% agreed that the printers and photocopiers are adequate, and 70.6% agreed that the microform reader/printers were also adequate, an average of 54.7% had no response or selected “unknown.”

Access to Collections: The Physical Library vs. the Virtual Library

Whereas a little over half of respondents (59.2%) agreed that they usually found most of the books they needed on the shelves in the library, 57.2% found the print periodicals, and 56.9% found the media in the cabinets, the majority (83.5%) successfully connected to the Library’s online resources, and 72% found the Library’s Web site well-organized and easy to navigate. Common negative themes in the comments related to the difficulties respondents had locating materials on the shelves. While the majority of respondents (68.9%) agreed that requests to obtain items from the Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS) were handled quickly and accurately, a little less than half (47.9%) left the answer blank or indicated “unknown.” In terms of loan periods, 64.7% of respondents indicated that they were adequate for their needs. Similarly, 67.4% agreed that the Library’s Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service provided

timely access to needed resources from other libraries and 65.1% agreed that book purchase requests are also handled in a timely manner.

Overall Satisfaction with Library Collections

In terms of library collections, an average of 66.6% were satisfied, about 8% were dissatisfied, and an average of 40% left their answers blank or indicated unknown. (See Table 3) Some of the comments related to specific gaps in the collections in terms of subject coverage.

Table 3

Summary: Overall Satisfaction with Library Collections by Type

Collection	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total		Unknown/Missing	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent of Total
Books	163	66	67	27.1	17	6.9	247	100	221	47.2
Print periodicals	186	65.7	78	27.6	19	6.7	283	100	185	39.5
Online periodicals	194	66.4	75	25.7	23	7.9	292	100	176	37.6
Media	175	66	64	24.2	26	9.8	265	100	203	43.4
Course reserves/e-reserves	219	69.1	71	22.4	27	8.5	317	100	151	32.3
AVERAGES	187.4	66.6	71	25.4	22.4	7.96	280.8	100	187.2	40

Discussion

Overall, 74.1% of respondents were satisfied with library services, facilities, and resources and 87.9% were “very likely” or “likely” to recommend the Oviatt Library to friends and colleagues. However, these figures are based on the total number of respondents to these questions and does not count those who left the answer to these questions blank or indicated “unknown.” For the questions regarding “helpfulness and courteousness” and “contributions to library knowledge” of staff at library service points, 50.2% and 55.1% of

respondents respectively indicated “unknown” or left the answer blank. On the other hand, when asked about the pleasantness of the Library’s physical environment, only 34 or 7.3% of the total respondents answered “unknown” or left it blank. This seems to imply that respondents are in the building, but at least half are not visiting the service desks. While one might suspect that a high frequency are not using the physical library, which would explain the underwhelming majority that were able to find needed library materials, only a small percentage (17.3%) left the answer to the question about books blank or indicated “unknown.” Yet a sizeable amount (31.6%) of respondents left the answer to the question about periodicals blank or indicated “unknown,” and regarding the ease of locating media in the Library, 51.9% of respondents left the answer blank or indicated “unknown.” In contrast, when asked about their success at connecting to the Library’s online resources and the ease of navigating the Web page, only 13% and 9.2% respectively of respondents left the answer blank or indicated “unknown.” Again, while the majority of respondents who use the ILL services are happy, the majority of total respondents (61.3%) left their answer blank or chose “unknown.” It is also interesting to note how much the Library’s collections are not used and/or how many respondents had no opinion. While an average of 66.6% were satisfied with Library books, periodicals (both print and online), media, and reserves, out of the total number of respondents, 40% left the answer blank or answered “unknown.” Furthermore, while, the majority (64.7%) of respondents agreed that loan periods were adequate for their needs, it is also telling that 53.4% of the total respondents left their answer blank or indicated “unknown,” which provides additional evidence of the lack of use of the Library’s circulating collection. What was unexpected was the number of respondents who appeared to have experience with the purchase request service: less than half (48.5%) left their answer blank or indicated unknown. Given that most of the purchase requests are from faculty, and the vast majority of respondents were undergraduate students, one can only conclude that the question was misinterpreted.

Conclusion

Given the lack of a randomized sample, one should not draw definitive conclusions from these data. However, since a sizeable number of students took the survey, these results should not be ignored, but taken with a bit of salt. More information on this survey, including a copy of the instrument and the detailed data tables can be found on the Library Assessment Plan web site at: <http://library.csun.edu/kdabbour/assessment.html#projects> Currently, data is being analyzed for another service assessment conducted by the Chancellor’s Office Quality Improvement Program that involved a randomized sample of students, faculty, and staff. Results of that survey will become available in the summer 2008.